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ON PAGE 1A

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Latin aid debate 'far from reality'

By Mike Connolly
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WASHINGTON — Congressional debate over President Reagan's Central American policy has "strayed too far from reality," Reagan said Tuesday — lashing out at his critics as he charged that communist moves in the area threaten the USA's security "from pole to pole."

Reagan — with his proposals for military aid for El Salvador and anti-government rebels in Nicaragua stalled in Congress — said at a White House lunch with Hispanic leaders that "if Central America is lost, then our own borders will be threatened."

"We cannot ignore the consequences of passively watching guerrillas force communist dictatorships down the throats of the people of Central America," he said, claiming communists are attempting to form a string of "anti-American Soviet-style dictatorships" there.

Reagan said, "Economic assistance, as much as some people on Capitol Hill would like to think otherwise, will not overcome the military threat" in El Salvador.

Reagan made no mention of reported CIA involvement in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors or new reports that it was behind an Oct. 10 attack on a Nicaraguan fuel storage area.

The reports said the raid on the town of Corinto was carried out by CIA-hired mercenaries and directed by CIA agents.

A World Court ruling is expected today on whether the USA must answer Nicaraguan charges stemming from the mining. The White House has said it will ignore any world court decision on Central America.